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RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 1055  
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SUBJECT: ITALIAN MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR VISIT TO BELGRADE

Classified By: Classified by David D. Pearce, Political Minister Counselor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. MFA Political Director Giulio Terzi visited Belgrade on February 14 to deliver a bilateral message to the Belgrade leadership that the Contact Group was unified in its approach to the upcoming Kosovo status talks. Terzi also told PM Kostunica that both the Belgrade leadership and the Kosovo Serbs must participate fully in the talks to preserve their interests. He did not directly raise possible Kosovar independence. After the visit, MFA Balkan director Raimondo De Cardona stated that Terzi wanted to avoid putting pressure on Belgrade and claimed that the recent Serbian Radical Party outburst calling for a pledge to protect Kosovo through all available means was a direct result of the public British message last week. End summary.

12. (C) MFA Balkan Director De Cardona told poloff that Terzi visited Belgrade to meet with PM Kostunica and members of Serbian president Tadic's staff. According to De Cardona, Terzi presented a "more balanced" message than the British by not raising the issue of Kosovar independence directly. He told Kostunica, however, that the upcoming Kosovo status talks will involve substantive issues that require Belgrade's attention. Terzi also told Kostunica that CG was united in their approach to the Kosovo issue.

13. (C) De Cardona noted that Terzi did not want to cause additional political pressure on Belgrade nor did he want Kostunica to get the impression that the CG had predetermined the outcome of the status talks. De Cardona said Terzi's low-profile approach was preferable to inflammatory public remarks. He linked recent British comments to the Serbian Radical Party's call for the Serbian Government to prevent Kosovar independence by any means necessary.

14. (C) Comment. De Cardona insists that the GOI recognized that Kosovo is headed for independence and that the Italian MFA will eventually encourage Belgrade to get realistic about that possibility. For now, however, they believe raising this issue directly will only encourage the Serbs to dig in and wait for an imposed solution. End comment.

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